

Richardson decries alleged CIA naming

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London—The departing United States ambassador to Britain, Elliot L. Richardson, decried the decision by a left-wing British weekly to publish today the names of three alleged senior Central Intelligence Agency officials here.

Mr. Richardson, who is returning to Washington to become President Ford's secretary of commerce, criticized such practices because they were believed to have led to the assassination of Richard Welch, the CIA station chief in Athens, last month.

For Britain, however, the disclosures were "trivial" matters, Mr. Richardson told a farewell news conference. Here, he explained, the CIA role was "concerned solely with intelligence" and "fully understood by the British government."

The practice of naming CIA agents under "light cover" in U.S. embassies abroad has now spread to Paris and Madrid.

In London, the left-wing weekly, *Time Out*, has been in the practice since last March when it printed an article on

how to identify CIA embassy men and listed seven names.

Later, it identified 62 more alleged CIA agents in London, a step that caused 34 Labor members of Parliament to ask for a government explanation.

A spokesman for the weekly said yesterday it would identify three more alleged senior officials who have been recently transferred.

A reporter said that Philip Agee, a former CIA agent who has been running a campaign to identify his former colleagues and have them "go home," had talked to *Time Out* but had "no particular hand to play in our inquiries."

Asked about Mr. Agee—a frequent guest on British television recently—Ambassador Richardson described him as a "typical sorehead" who had been "disgruntled" with CIA service.

The ambassador declined to "engage in arguments" with Mr. Agee in order not "to promote his private ambitions."

Mr. Richardson, a moderate Massachusetts Republican with private presidential ambitions, is due to go to New Hampshire

soon after his return to boost the candidacy of President Ford.

Politics was not brought up at Mr. Richardson's crowded last meeting with the London press as queries about the CIA and Northern Ireland dominated the session.

The ambassador expressed concern about private American contributions to the IRA that helps finance violence in Ulster. He said Americans should understand that the British government's policy was to promote harmonious power sharing by both Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. As for the presence of British troops there, he said one of their main purposes was to protect the Catholic minority.

Mr. Richardson said his "great sense of affection and admiration" for the British people had grown in his nearly year-long term as ambassador.

He is being replaced by Anne Armstrong, the wife of a wealthy Texas rancher and former White House aide under President Nixon.

Though she is a political appointee with the resources to

cope with the costs of being the ambassador to the Court of St. James, Mr. Richardson said his experience had shown that a career man could hold the post with the more generous allowances now granted.

As parting advice to his replacement, Mr. Richardson said he would say, "you can count on British humor."

That, he said, had made his task easier. Despite some misgivings and questions, he called the British "fundamentally friendly" to the United States.

Meanwhile, Louis Heren, foreign editor of the *Times* of London, wondered in a commentary who would be the "next victim" in the wake of disclosures of CIA officials in Europe. "Apparently not the KGB," he wrote.

Mr. Heren then delivered scathing criticism of Bernard D. Nossiter of the *Washington Post* for suggesting that "some" British journalists abroad were "undoubtedly" on the payroll of the secret intelligence service. No names had been published.

"It is a damning and damnable charge which can be neither proved nor disproved," the foreign editor wrote. He was concerned of "what could happen in certain parts of the world when B. Nossiter's McCarthyist charge is read by xenophobes overly willing to believe the worst."

The headline over the commentary was spread over five of the paper's seven columns. It said: "This dangerous game that could put a gun at the head of British reporters abroad."